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# How a Mediator Can Help Design a Path Forward: Building Trust and Reaching a Resolution

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One of the most valuable results of mediation is that it allows parties to put the past behind them and salvage seemingly irreconcilable relationships. Mediation gives parties an opportunity to find a path forward in a variety of contexts, including business and employment disputes and personal injury cases. In situations where the parties have an acrimonious relationship, multiple mediation sessions may be necessary to reach a resolution.

## The Role of Multiple Mediation Sessions

The need for multiple mediation sessions arises from the fact that the parties involved may have deep-seated grievances that cannot be resolved in a single session. In such cases, it is important to allow the parties to express their concerns and feelings in a safe and controlled environment, which can help to build trust and create a foundation for future discussion.

Multiple mediation sessions can help to ensure that all members of each party are fully engaged in the process. There is always a team on each side of a controversy, and individual team members may have become involved at different times. Each party may have individu-



als who have different interests and priorities, thus making for complex dynamics, inter-cine conflicts or unrecognized struggles with a group. Initial separate, partial-day mediation sessions with each party may allow everyone in a group to have an opportunity to express their views and opinions, thereby enabling the mediator to assist the group in finding common ground. The separate sessions should be followed by full-day mediation sessions with both parties.

## Progress, Perspective and Renewed Energy

Another reason why multiple mediation sessions may be necessary is that the parties may need time to reflect on the issues discussed

during the mediation. It is not uncommon for parties to become emotional during mediation, and they may need time to process their feelings and thoughts before they can continue with the mediation process. Multiple sessions can provide the parties with the time they need to reflect and prepare for the next session.

### **Creating a Path Forward**

The inability of the parties to reach agreement after a single mediation session is not a failure, but a pause that protects and benefits all parties in the session. It may create safety, security and the feeling of control. It allows the parties to absorb, assess and process information received; correct ineffective decisions on their part; and conduct a more thorough assessment of their original position in light of new information. The pause may shed light on a more effective argument or agreement.

Multiple sessions also allow the parties to take a break between sessions to reflect on the progress made so far. This can help the parties approach the next session with a fresh perspective and renewed energy, which can lead to more productive discussions and a faster resolution of the dispute. Even when the parties rack up many small wins during the course of a session, they may not appreciate it immediately and leave the session with a sense of failure because the dispute has not been resolved. But, on reflection, the parties will be reminded that forward progress has been made and that the ultimate resolution of the dispute is possible.

### **Working Through Emotions and Building Trust**

Finally, multiple mediation sessions allow the parties to work through their emotions and build trust over time. Emotions, such as anger, resentment and mistrust, can cloud discussions. Multiple sessions allow the parties to work through their emotions and build trust with each other, which can lead to the resolution of the dispute.

In conclusion, multiple mediation sessions may be necessary in situations where the parties have an acrimonious relationship and one party is demanding an apology from the other. These sessions can help to build trust, provide time for reflection and ensure that the parties are fully engaged in the process. The number of sessions required will depend on the specific circumstances of the dispute, and the mediator will work with the parties to determine the appropriate number of sessions needed to reach a resolution.

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